

Jude 22 - 25

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[0 : 00] Psalm 108. I'm just going to read the first five verses, make a few comments before we worship. My heart is steadfast, O God. I will sing and make music with all my soul. Awake, harp and lyre, I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations. I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love, higher than the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth. That very first line of David's, my heart is steadfast. Steadfast means resolute, determined. My heart is determined, O God, to sing your praises and to worship you. And that's what I mean about coming to worship God. We don't always come wanting to, but we are to come anyway, whether we want to or feel like it or not, because God deserves it, doesn't he? We don't just do things that we want to. In a sense, I feel like driving on the right side of the road today, so I'm going to drive on the wrong side of the road, if you know what I mean, the right side, the wrong side. But we don't do things because we feel like it. We do them because we know it's the right thing to do. And God has called us to worship him.

And so the psalmist says here, for great is your love, higher than the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. It's because of who God is that we worship him and because of what he's done for us in his faithfulness and his salvation.

Now, our first hymn is one sentence that starts with a resolute determination. All my days, I will sing this song of gladness. So in times of trouble and trial, in times of sorrow and grief, in times of joy, we shall sing to the Lord. And all the days, we are determined to follow him and to glorify him. So let's stand and sing. 144 in our hymn books. 144.

[1 : 57] 144. ■■■os March Jude. And if you'd like to turn there with me, that's the very last but one book of the Bible, the penultimate book in the New Testament. And we're going to read the whole of the letter together. By way of a refresher, it's been a few weeks since we were in Jude.

but we're going to be, this is our final time in Jude so I'm not going to try and do a review of the whole letter but just those final few verses which I hope will be a great help to us.

So let's hear this letter, it's good to get everything in its context and to read through and hopefully get a feel for, if we don't know the letter all that well, get a feel for what Jude is striving for.

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James to those who've been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

[3 : 23] For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord.

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home, these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great day.

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him but said, The Lord rebuke you.

Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand. What things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals, these are the very things that destroy them. Woe to them!

[4 : 46] They have taken the way of Cain. They have rushed for profit into Balaam's error. They have been destroyed by Korah's rebellion. These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm.

Shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind. Autumn trees without fruit and uprooted, twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame, wandering stars for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. Enoch VII from Adam prophesied about these men. See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way.

And of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These men are grumblers, fault finders. They follow their own evil desires.

They boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.

[5 : 56] They said to you, in the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires. These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Be merciful to those who doubt. Snatch others from the fire and save them. To others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Saviour.

Be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen. We thank you.

[7 : 03] Well, turn with me to Jude, please. And today, the final verses of this letter. verses 22 to the end.

Verses 22 to the end. They're the verses we're going to be thinking about and I'll read them again just briefly. Be merciful to those who doubt. Snatch others from the fire and save them.

To others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

To the only God our Saviour. Be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen. If you go to the shops, and I'm sure that you all do at some time, and you want to buy some food, whether it be fruit or whatever it may be, nearly everything, of course, carries a best before date stamped upon it where you have to consume it before it goes off.

[8 : 11] I bought some yogurts a few weeks ago and they had a best before date, I think, for the end of the month. I went to open one and it was two weeks away from it and it was full of furry, hairy stuff.

It wasn't meant to be full of furry, hairy stuff. But this yogurts was all yucky and muzzy. And so I didn't eat it, naturally. But on those packets, it'll have the best before date and it'll say something like, if you open, keep refrigerated, consume within three days, and that sort of thing.

And we know, of course, that in all the food that we buy, there are preservatives to make them last a bit longer. But in spite of that, nothing lasts for years and years and years. Of course, having a freezer is great and they can preserve things for a long, long time, meat and so on.

But before there was freezers, in the old days, the meat would be rubbed with salt or pickled or even canned to preserve it. Over the years, people and animals have been preserved at ice.

Although, when they've discovered, they weren't in the same state as before they went into the ice. As you can imagine, they were dead. In 2007, they found a 500-year-old Inca child, so well preserved that she still had hair and everything else.

[9 : 32] And in that same year, a mammoth was discovered once as well. Some people are hoping that if they have their heads frozen when they die, that they can be brought back to life in years to come.

And cryogenics is what it's called. Or a waste of money is another thing you could call it too. But preservation. And the question really is this, what about us as Christians?

How is it that we can be preserved in the world in which we live? What's our best before date?

Some of us were pretty good before we were 40 and then it all sort of went downhill after that. But really, in the Christian faith, what is our best before date? Can anything preserve us? See, the problem, of course, with the reason why food goes off is, of course, bacteria in the atmosphere affect it and create this sort of decay.

Now, we live in a world which is full of sin. We live in a world which is full of corruption and decay.

Peter writes in his letter, his second letter, the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

[10 : 45] As Christians, how can we, as it were, not be corrupted? How can we continue in the Christian life as we should without being, as it were, caused to decay in our faith, in our walk with God, in our godliness, in our holiness, and so on?

When we are surrounded by such an amount of spiritual bacteria, spiritual corruption. Now, really, the whole of Jude's letter is about this matter of being preserved in the Christian life, being protected as Christians.

And, he writes to safeguard the believers from those corrupting influences around about them, particularly those corrupting influences which were coming from false teachers and false teaching. There they are spoken about in verse 4. Certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in. Godless men who changed the grace of God into a license.

And it's really about them he's talking. As you see, later on, he calls them grumblers and fault finders in verse 16, following their own evil desires. And their false teaching was just like bacteria in the church.

[11 : 57] It was causing all sorts of ruin and corruption. Verse 7, at the end, they serve in his example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

He's been looking at Old Testament believers and what happened to them when they also were influenced by false teaching and false things about God that led them away from God and brought great ruin to them.

And he said, just like them, Christians today, you need to be on your guard because there are false teachings and there are those things which can, as it were, corrupt you and cause you to decay and your spiritual life to fall and to cease.

Those of us who've been Christians for some years know, sadly, that's the truth. That many people who start off on the Christian journey, many people who start off going on for God sadly are influenced by all things around about them and they are pulled down and pulled away from a godly life.

And so all the way through the letter there's been this sort of hammering home, the danger and the problem and the warning against these things and then of course the last time we came to verse 17 a few weeks ago when he closes with this great encouragement but you, dear friends or beloved, you're different, remember verse 17 and verse 20 and he gives them encouragement, encouragement about how they are to keep themselves from those evil things, keep themselves and avoid themselves from going off, going bad.

[13 : 32] He's told them of course, we saw there particularly in verses 20 and 21 that they're to build themselves up, that they're to strengthen themselves in the triune God and we saw there that the God, the Holy Spirit is mentioned, God the Father is mentioned, his love and Christ the Lord Jesus the Son is mentioned as well, the triune God.

It's in our relationship with them that we have this strengthening and building up of our faith and this enabling of God the Holy Spirit to live that life which honors him.

But then, as he comes to the end, he seems to make a switch in one sense and he begins to put the onus not upon himself but upon those in the local church.

He shows that we have a God-given privilege and a responsibility to care for one another within the local church as we read from verse 22 and following. Now that's something that we know goes all the way through the New Testament, doesn't it?

Loving one another, caring for one another, supporting one another, strengthening one another. Christ has established the church to be a community that looks out for one another, that helps one another in the Christian life.

[14:47] Now we know that our salvation is a God-given gift, it's something that is uniquely imparted by his Spirit to us as individuals, but the church has a very vital role in encouraging and helping and strengthening us in the faith.

And for that reason, Jude gives these final instructions. But really, again, he's repeating what is said elsewhere in the Scriptures. In Galatians, in chapter 6, carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Verse 10 of that same chapter, Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. When Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, he says, We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up. So those of us who have been recipients of the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, that love that's been poured out into our lives, are those who are to not only love God and love Christ, but we're to love one another.

John, in his first letter, speaks so much about the importance of loving one another in the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 5, verse 1, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well.

[16:17] That's very important because more and more amongst Christians we find the sort of the sidelining of the church. We get this sort of sense, I mean the world says it, of course, we speak to people on the doors, we say, Oh, I don't need to go to church to be a Christian.

But something of that attitude can come into us even as Christians, that sense in which, well, it's my walk with the Lord and my faith that counts. Yes, that's important and it's true, but we have been called to be part of a local church.

That's why church membership is so important as well. If you're not a member of your local church, you should seriously pray and think about that because it's a sign of saying, I'm one with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

I'm looking to support them. I'm looking to be supported by them. It's a recognition of our own weakness as well as a recognition of that we have been given by God gifts to serve one another.

And so I want us to think about, first of all, two sections. First is verses 22 and 23 and then the closing encouragements and blessing that Jude gives as well. Now, in those verses 22 and 23, there seems to be three different people groups that Jude is instructing the Christians to meet with and deal with.

[17:29] We have those in verse 22, be merciful to those who doubt. A different lot of people, verse 23, snatch others from the fire and save them. And then finally, a third lot of people to others show mercy mixed with fear.

Now, what he has to say here is to do with those who've fallen into the false teachings of those there. But this has direct implication to us as well, to how we deal with Christians, other Christians, who are struggling with temptation, struggling with peer pressure, struggling perhaps with ways of behavior which are not what God has instructed in his word.

How do we approach one another? How do we care for one another? This is a difficult passage in one sense. It's talking about something which we don't talk about, church discipline. That word, of course, discipline.

Well, that's just not a word. You don't have that in school anymore, of course, and you don't have it in the home anymore. We don't like discipline. But the Bible speaks clearly about it and it's so vitally important that we have and we need discipline, whether we're young or whether we're old, whether we're long in the faith or short in the faith, that's important.

So we have these three groups of people reflecting, I believe, three differing types of people in the church then who, those of us who are stronger in the faith, need to come alongside, need to help, need to support.

[18:52] And I think they reflect in one sense what we might call three levels of decay. Just like I was talking about that yogurt in my fridge which had gone muzzy and gone furry and all that sort of thing.

So often food doesn't just sort of go from being perfectly good to being rubbish, does it? It may start to smell a little bit or it may start to have a, I don't know whether you're like me, but if there's just a

few little bits of mould around the edge of a bread, I just break them off and still eat it all the same anyway.

But, you know, there can be stuff that really is rank and you've got to throw it away and stuff that's just beginning to go off. So I think there's three levels of spiritual decay as well that Jude is talking about here.

And the lightest of them and they go down in degrees, the lightest of them is verse 22, be merciful to those who doubt. Now we all have doubts but I think he's going a bit stronger than that.

Those who doubt, those are people who waver between the truth and ever. People are a little bit confused, not sure. And I think he's referring in this particular case to those who've heard, been listening to some of the false teachers, their false teachings and you can see that some of their teaching was to do with sexual behavior and immorality.

[20 : 05] Some of it was to do with other things as well, our attitude to money, attitude to the way that we speak to God and so on. But these people, they've been listening and now they're confused.

They had been brought up in the truth, they had been learning the truth, but now these false teachers were sowing these sort of ideas and thoughts that they hadn't considered before and they don't know which is right and wrong and they're being tempted and drawn towards what is wrong. Like all people, they need to be dealt with, first of all, tenderly. Tenderly. Patiently. With compassion. We're not, you know, when we see somebody who's going through something and we're talking with somebody and they start to talk about something which isn't quite right or confused, we've got to be careful that we're not harsh and don't say, oh, you're so stupid, why can't you see?

Or something similar in that sort of vein, which we can do, can't we? We think, why can't you see that this is wrong? But no, we need to be wise and loving in the counsel that we give to help them to recognise the right and the truth and encourage them to reject the error and not entertain it.

As Paul writes to Timothy in his second letter, he tells him how to deal with people. He says, correct, rebuke, and encourage, listen, with great patience and careful instruction.

[21 : 26] When he writes to the Galatians, he says this, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. That's got to be the sense of the spirit because it's got to come from a sense of humility.

Dear friends, all of us could easily fall. All of us listen to things that actually tend to draw us away a little bit, away from the Lord or away towards things which are true.

False. We all are susceptible. And so when we are dealing with others, when we are dealing with those who are struggling with doubts and so on, then we need to do it with a sense of humility.

A sense of, this could be me, I could get it wrong. And how would I like somebody to approach me and help me to deal with an issue I'm working through if it wasn't gently and carefully? One of the great tragedies that has come out in some aspects of the church are these sort of tactics which are bullying tactics, fear-inducing tactics.

That's what the cults do, by the way. If you notice that, cults like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, if people step out of line then they really come down like a ton of bricks. There is no compassion there because there's no grace, you see.

[22 : 34] But we've experienced grace. And false teachers and heretics will move people through fear. So if you have somebody and you're listening to somebody, it may even be on one of these so-called Christian channels on the TV and there's a sense in which they're sort of implying fearful things will happen to you if you don't do what they do, I'm not talking about the gospel, I'm talking about being as a Christian, then I would suspect that they are probably teaching and peddling something which is not true.

Yes, we preach hell as we did this morning, we preach the reality of God's judgment, but dear friends, love is much more powerful than fear, isn't it? And why do we follow the Lord Jesus Christ? Because he stands behind us with a whip? No, we follow the Lord Jesus because he's the loving shepherd who guides us into those places of green pasture. So that's the first person, doubting. They're not sure. And again, dear friends, as Christians, there will come perhaps people that we meet with at uni, people that we meet with from other young people's groups, people that we meet with in other ways or things that we read in Christian magazines or papers, and they seem to sow a doubt in our minds about whether we should be like this or like that.

Don't be led astray by those things immediately. Test them. It may be that they're good, it may be that they're right, but it may also be that they're simply going to cause confusion.

[23 : 56] That's the first level, somebody who's doubting, struggling. The second level we have is the first part of verse 23, snatch others from the fire and save them. Now it seems to me that these are people who've already begun to go down the line of the false teachers, begun already to perhaps accept and condone the sinful practices of these false teachers, perhaps even beginning to put them into practice themselves.

Notice there that he says snatch others from the fire. What's the fire he's talking about? It could be, of course, he's talking about the fire which we might speak of as sinful desires.

Paul writes about them in 1 Corinthians about those who are not married. He says it's better that you marry rather than burn with passion with those desires for one another. Better that you don't have sexual relationships with another.

If you can't control yourself it's better that you marry. He's not talking about that I don't believe because when we look at Jude he's already mentioned fire hasn't he? Once before and it's there in verse 7.

They serve as an example of those who will suffer the punishment of eternal fire. Sin ultimately leads to hell. Sin ultimately leads to judgment and it seems more likely that that's what Jude is talking about that he is looking for us to seek to snatch to grab hold of those who are one sense going down that slippery slope going down that way which is towards judgment from God.

[25 : 27] we must do all that we can to remove that person who is already dangerously close to the flames. Those of you who are parents I'm sure you've had the experience at times where you've just turned your back for a moment haven't you?

in the kitchen and the child's gone to reach up for the hob or the gas and you've leapt haven't you and snapped and you haven't sort of said now dear please don't touch that because by the time you've said now dear please don't touch that they're handily in the fire won't it?

no you just go and knock it away or grab it away you may even have to smack it away and they cry and then you have to explain why you did it. Now we have to be sometimes quite forceful in love remembering gentleness yes but remembering as well that there are times when we have to be strong for those who need that strength.

Here's James as he writes to the end of his letter he says my brothers if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back remember this whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Just sitting down with somebody who's already been involved and engaged in sinful practice isn't always going to be helpful. Sometimes we have to be quite strong sometimes we have to be as even as Paul told Timothy to rebuke to correct with gentleness with patience but to say look this is wrong this is not right.

[26 : 56] There may even be the need for direct intervention even disciplining before the church. It's interesting that for those who do not believe in church discipline or think that Jesus wouldn't have done it it's Jesus who gives us the pattern for church discipline in Matthew in chapter 18 talking about sin.

It says if your brother sins against you go and show him his fault if he listens to you you've won your brother. If he will not listen to you take two others one or two others and so on if he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church if he refuses to listen even to the church treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

So there is this need to be quite strong at times not on our own but perhaps even within the church there are times when we have to in loving kindness have to say to somebody look this is dreadfully wrong this is dangerous this is not what God would have for you to do.

Now of course there is the danger isn't there people might be accused of of arrogance or accused of being unloving and so on but I believe if we do it with a right heart before God if we do it not because we are trying to prove ourselves better than others but as God has instructed us to snatch others from the fire then I believe that the Lord will do and bring about what is good.

So there is that second stage there is those just doubting the struggle those who have begun to go down the slope and then ultimately there is the third lot to others show mercy mixed with fear hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh it seems that these are people who have become thoroughly entrenched in that false way of living and of teaching they have gone down that way of sexual immorality and given themselves up to it as Jude has warned against them they have gone

and they are fully fledged disciples of these false teachers they are convinced of the rightness of their actions that actually they are in the right and that you are in the wrong and so Jude tells us we are to treat them with a mixture of mercy and fear mercy really because of the sad state to which they have fallen we are to be broken hearted one of the things that is so sad isn't it when you see it it is just on the news

[29 : 16] I think today about a member of the Lords a deputy leader of the Lords has been had to step down because he has been involved in some naughty things he shouldn't be doing put it that way and there is the papers isn't there and there is the media saying ha ha look how the mighty have fallen and of course they love to do it especially when there is somebody who is a Christian or a member of the church the bishop or the priest or whoever it is who has committed some sin they love to laugh at and delight in the falling and the failings of others dear friends that must never be our spirit and attitude when a Christian brother or sister when a Christian or even somebody who calls themselves a Christian falls into gross sin we are to be sad we are to be sad not only because the name of Christ is dishonoured but we are to be sad and have mercy upon them again reminding ourselves as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10 those who think they stand beware lest you fall some of these dear folks have been Christians for a lot longer than we have and yet have fallen into sin let us be merciful towards them let's be merciful let's have compassion born with awareness of the terrible consequences of sin the heartache that they will bring upon themselves mercy but notice he says fear mercy mixed with fear what does he mean does he mean fear for ourselves there is a sense of that isn't there hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh in one sense there is a separateness as I say keep away from that it is a bit like they have had to do in East Africa haven't they

West Africa with the Ebola where people have to be sort of segregated and quarantined keeping away because it is such a dangerous thing and certainly when we are dealing with people who have fallen into gross sin we have got to be very careful for ourselves that we do not as it were just think that we won't fall that way or be contaminated in one day or drawn that way we will be we live in a world dear friends where we are influenced by those around about us and as Christians we have got to be very careful about the relationships that we have that is why it is the worst thing in the world particularly if we are younger to be dating or calling somebody who is not a Christian because they will ultimately lead us and direct us and pull us away from Christ in some way but even in our friendships again this is going to be tricky when we go to university or we are working in the world there will be people we want to be friendly with but their way of life is so different to ours that though we can be friendly we have got to be so careful we don't find ourselves dragged down the pub dragged down to the night club wherever it may be in such a way that we find ourselves ultimately losing the way but I don't think it's that fear that he's talking about here at all

I think Judy's very clearly talking about that fear of God there's a healthy fear of God isn't there as I said before fear in itself is wrong because fear is not the motivation but a fear of God is a right respect for God a sense of awe for God a recognition that he does judge sin that he does hate what is evil but we don't quake under before him but we honour him and we seek to be fearful of doing those things which we know are displeasing to him and that's the balance really in all of our Christian lives and particularly in this matter as we say of church discipline if we have all mercy and no fear then we just go soft and we just say oh well yes it's your life you do what you like it's okay and you know I don't want to be harsh to you and tell you off and if we have all fear without mercy then we are just hard aren't we and we are judgmental and we are unfeeling we've got to have together mercy for the sinner and yet fear of God to present the gospel and the truth before them both together and we will be useful to the Lord what do we have to do then with these dear people it seems

I believe that what Jude tells us he doesn't tell us to snatch them away doesn't tell us in one sense that we can do anything I think practically there are those people who have fallen into sin that have to be loved to a certain degree at a distance so it may be that we have to engage that very fearful element of Christian discipline church discipline where we put them out of fellowship that's something again that Jesus taught about didn't he in Matthew we read it there in 18 if he refuses to listen to the church treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector treat him as a non-Christian that's hard isn't it do we hate non-Christians no of course we don't hate non-Christians do we not talk to non-Christians no of course we talk to non-Christians but we recognise there's a difference between a believer and an unbeliever we don't say to this person you're living a life of sin which in

one sense is the fruit of a heart that is not following Christ and we don't just say well you're still a Christian or you are a Christian or you were a Christian we have to say look you've made a decision you've walked away and Paul of course gives that very powerful example in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 where he speaks about a man who was in the church who had committed a terrible act of immorality of incest and ultimately this is what Paul says hand this man over to Satan so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord that's incredible isn't it hand him over let him go in one sense from the church hoping and praying ultimately that he might be saved again we're not saying that people who turn away from the Lord and fall into sin and backslide are lost because if we are Christ we are Christ for his forever but if we fall into sin the worst thing in one sense the church can do is say there there doesn't matter it's okay you can continue to live in sin and call yourself a Christian no you've got to make that distinction of course if you know the story you know the events surrounding the 1 Corinthians 5 we find we get to the second letter of Paul then we see that brother restored and forgiven and that's what our prayer is ultimately isn't it that those who fall into sin will be restored be brought back and it may well be that God uses that very strong but loving hand of discipline to bring that person back to bring them to their senses to restore them ultimately to faith in God but here we are again in Jude so Jude's been warning about people who have been influenced by these things and they've seemed to some have got confused some have started to go down the wrong path some have committed themselves down the wrong path and it may well be in our own minds and hearts well how on earth Lord can we be preserved how on earth can we continue to live the Christian life without falling into sin in this way what can prevent us from being deceived and Christians have faced this challenge all the time all through church history Christians have challenged by the world in which they live and say what should we do and some have said well let's get into a ghetto mentality let's just sort of bolt the doors let's just sort of batten down the hatches we're the faithful ones and let's just really huddle up and close in tight if it's not mobile phones it's tablets keep the world at arm's length as it were be suspicious of everybody who calls themselves a Christian no of course not that isn't the way to deal with it we mustn't be afraid of grappling with the big questions in this world we mustn't be afraid of grappling with those areas where it will cause hurt and harm if we love one another then we will be hurt by one another if we love one another then we will let one another down if we do love one another then we'll have to speak strongly to one another from time to time with love now it isn't the way just to simply clamp down and batten down the hatches but rather dear friends we come to again once more to the very centre the very foundation of our faith and our trust we trust the Lord it's his church he's the one that saved us he's the one that's preserved us how is it possible just think of the situation here we are in the 21st century over 2000 years since our Lord Jesus Christ established that

[38 : 03] New Testament church how is it possible with all the persecution all the heresy all the false teaching that there still is thousands millions of Christians around the world who love the Lord Jesus and all to his truth well because God has kept his church hasn't he God has preserved his people God has preserved his word and so our confidence is that he'll do the same as well so then we come to these last two verses verses 24 and 25 what wonderful verses I'm sure many of us know them off by heart we often use them at the end of a of a service as a blessing no our confidence is not in ourselves our confidence is not even in church discipline our confidence is not in our ability our confidence is in him to him who's able to keep you notice all the way back how this sort of tale dovetails doesn't it with a very first verse kept by Jesus Christ to him who's able to keep you we have a God who preserves us a saviour who keeps us one who looks after us one who who will ultimately have his hand upon us for good and bring us through to the end of the course the end of the race in the old testament the Lord God is spoken of as Israel's keeper and we belong to that same company that great host throughout time in history who belong to the Lord who he's saved for himself who he's brought into that place of relationship and faith and so we are kept but kept till when when's our best before date we're kept until when no that's not the right way to put it actually it's not we're kept it's not we are sorry we're not kept till when but we are kept for when we are kept for a specific time we are kept for that time when we shall be presented before

God's glorious presence there's a lovely echo of that found in Ephesians in chapter 5 where Paul is talking about the mystery which is marriage which reflects the Lord Jesus Christ and his church in Ephesians 5 he says this Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant

church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless do you realise dear friends that the reason that Christ came into the world to save us was because he wanted us to be trophies beautiful ornaments as it were of his grace and goodness to present it to himself and to the Father when he comes again when we look at ourselves in the mirror on a Monday morning we don't look all that presentable particularly before we've managed to put our teeth in and do our hair and so on but in God's eyes we are beautiful and we are being preserved and prepared to be presented before him in that place of great glory and joy when Christ comes again and his glory is revealed to all the world so the glory that he's placed in us and upon us will be revealed to all the world as well and it's not until then that we shall be perfect it's not until then that we shall be without sin it's not until then that we shall be free from all corruption only then shall we be truly holy and only then shall we have that perfect joy do you notice that to him who's able to keep you from falling and that doesn't just that doesn't mean falling if I can put it that way tripping up and falling into sin and getting things wrong it means falling out of salvation we cannot fall out of the grace of God we cannot fall out of the very hands of God that's the wonderful verses in John and chapter 10 where Jesus speaks about the fact that those who are his are in his hands none shall pluck them from my hand and none shall pluck them from my father's hand we are held but now he's talking about that yes we will sin and we will get it wrong and we do need the church and we do need one another but notice this connection present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy holiness and joy go together yeah the greater our holiness the greater our joy and the greater our joy the greater our holiness when we're in heaven we shall have both in perfection but the wonderful thing is as we go on in the

Christian life those two things should work together the more we seek to please God the more we are pleased with God the more we seek to do his will the more that we know the joy of our salvation heaven would not be heaven if it didn't have joy and holiness people just think that heaven is just joyful and they want the holiness bit or they think maybe it's just holiness without joy but no wonderfully it's joy and holiness together in perfection no dear friends that's what we eagerly long for to him who's able to keep you from falling even in this sinful and wicked and corrupt world even though our hearts are still far from as what they should be yet he will present us before himself in that glorious presence without fault and with great joy we eagerly desire that don't we we long for that day to be free from sin to be free from the corruptions of this world to be free from those things that pull us down and drag us down to be liberated in the joy of

God's presence and of course the wonderful thing is this we shall get there how because of who God is to him who's him verse 25 the only God our saviour the only God our saviour he's the one who has the power Jew describes this salvation to God this keeping to his grace our only God our only saviour nothing less than the divine goodness of God is able to keep you and I from falling into sin only the powerful work of God is able and will be able to sustain us and so there's those closing words of praise again as we started this evening with praise we see to our God be glory glory that means his impeccable majesty the dazzling glory of God that glory that when

Moses had spent that time with God up on the mountain he had to put a bag over his head because his face reflected that glory it's going to be awesome when you see the sun shining which you do occasionally in Whitby once or twice a year it's beautiful isn't it it's glorious but when the shining of the glory of God is seen it's going to put the sun in the shade to him be glory majesty that which befits the king the honour the dignity the awesomeness that belongs to him the majesty the power the omnipotence the ability to do all things according to his will nothing is too impossible nothing is too hard for him dear friends and his power is at work in us says Ephesians 3 and the authority the dominion the rule God has the power to do everything that he wants to do and he does everything that he wants to do if he has saved you then he will keep you if he has saved you then he will enable you to live for him and to follow him all these wonderful facets of God of course are revealed to us through the

[46 : 05] Lord Jesus Christ he is the one who brings those blessings he is the one through whom they flow to us it's faith in Christ that makes the difference and it's through Jesus we bring our praise and our worship and adoration today and tomorrow and forever yes dear friends we are living in an imperfect world and we are imperfect people but we are heading to a perfect place when we shall be without sin until then we are not growing more mouldy we may in other ways be a bit more smelly than we were but we're not growing more mouldy no we're growing and developing and being changed into more glorious and wonderful people close with these words of Paul in 2 Corinthians and chapter 3 and verse 18 again I'm sure that you know them as well we who with

unveiled faces all reflect the

Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit Amen to him who is able to keep you and me from falling and to present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great and exceeding joy to the only God our Saviour be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages today tomorrow and forever more Amen